

## French History Competition 2024/2025

“80 Years of Liberation! The Path to the End of World War Two in Germany and France”

“You have all shown how important remembrance, cooperation and cross-border dialogue are.” With these words, Ragna Heynowski and Lena Rücker from EUSTORY France opened the festive award ceremony of the Franco-German History Competition 2024/25. The virtual event gathered nearly 30 prize winners and teachers from both France and Germany and marked the culmination of this year’s binational exchange around the topic “80 years of liberation! The road to the end of the Second World War in Germany and France”.



*One of the awarded submissions | Photo: Year 8, Collège Pierre Mendès France, Soyaux*

Bernhard Schaupp, director of the House Rhineland-Palatinate, congratulated the winners and reminded participants of the historical significance of liberation: “A liberation for all of Europe from an ideology that must never return.” He underlined the role of EUSTORY in encouraging young people from both countries to reflect on history and memory.

Representing the Franco-German Youth Office (OFAJ/DFJW), the head of office of the Secretariat General, Emmeline Charenton, highlighted the importance of exchange and historical awareness in a time when nationalism and populism are on the rise. She stressed that the concept of liberation might seem distant to younger generations but becomes tangible when linked to personal stories and family histories. “Peace and freedom are not a given. We have a duty to remember,” she stated. Through EUSTORY, young people are given the tools to reflect critically and keep memory alive: “It is through exchange that a European culture of remembrance emerges.”

The diversity of and reflection within the submitted entries especially impressed the jury: theatre plays, graphic novels, essays and interviews all showcased the creativity and engagement of the participants. The winning contributions were honoured in four main categories: for binational teams, lower and upper secondary students, as well as in an independent special category.

What impressed the jury most was the remarkable depth, creativity and emotional resonance across the wide variety of submissions. From regionally grounded research to personal stories collected in moving interviews, the participants showed a strong commitment to historical exploration – even when researching small villages that seem to have no relevant historical background. One project stood out for its source-based approach that vividly recreated the atmosphere of the time of liberation, while another impressed with the courage to capture the voices of the last living eyewitnesses of the liberation in France and - a solo effort that reached university-level quality. As the author of the project aptly put it: “*We belong to the last generation to listen firsthand.*” In the more creative formats, a theatre play and a hand-drawn comic touched the jury with their emotional strength and visual power.

Looking ahead to next year, the competition will explore the post-war years and the question: How do two former enemies manage to reconcile? “*The winners of today are the torchbearers who keep the memories of the eyewitnesses alive,*” concluded Bernhard Schaupp.